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## A MARCH BIRD LIST FROM THE CALOOSA- HATCHEE RIVER AND LAKE OKEECHOBEE.

BY FRANK M. PHELPS.

The species appearing in this list were observed between March 2d and 13th, 1912, principally on a motor boat trip from Fort Myers to Lake Okeechobee in company with Oscar E. Baynard, the warden of the National Association of Audubon Societies, who was going into this region to search out rookeries of Egrets, with the view of having them guarded.

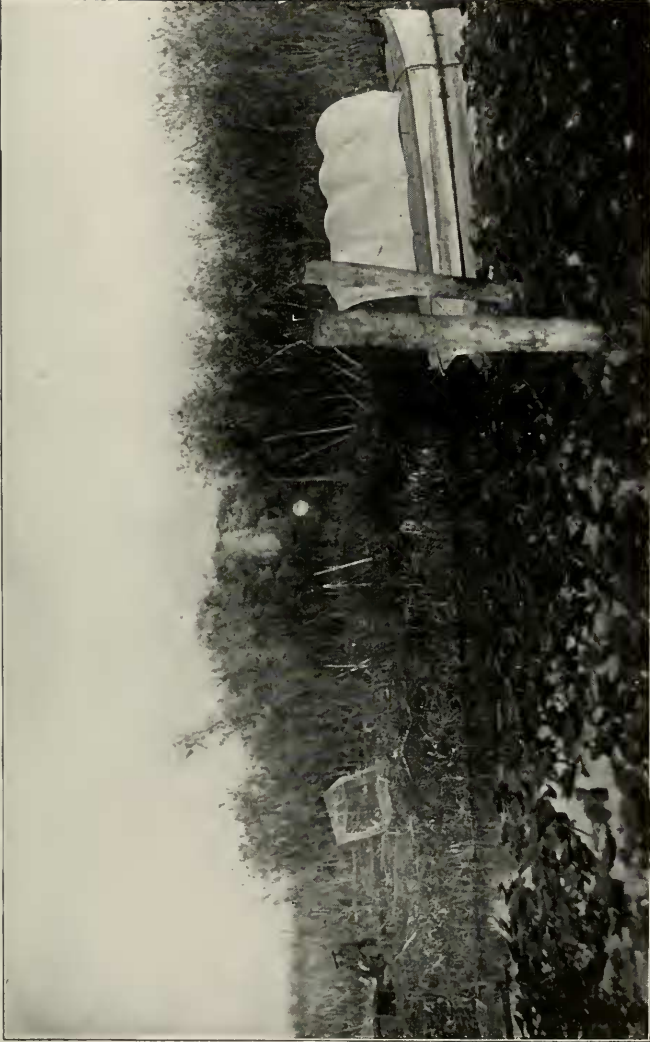
Because of certain points of interest we have included the notes of a one-day trip, taken March 2d, down the Caloosahatchee River to Sanibel and Pine Islands, lying in the Gulf just off the river mouth. The primary purpose of this trip was to visit an Eagle's nest on Pine Island, previously known to Baynard, with the view of taking a series of photographs of the big, six weeks' old eaglet, who was its sole occupant. This nest was about fifty feet up in a pine, but the strong wind blowing off the Gulf and lack of space to operate in made photography somewhat difficult. By posing the youngster on one edge of the nest or a nearby limb and backing out onto a limb on the opposite side, success was finally achieved and several good pictures obtained.

We started for Lake Okeechobee on the afternoon of the 4th, in Baynard's motor boat, "The Egret," towing a canoe

for use in the shallow waters that abound in the Everglades. The Egret served not only as a means of transportation, but as a home as well. She was equipped with bows over which a canvas covering could be drawn to keep off rain or dew. In the stern we carried a gasoline stove, as fuel is difficult to obtain in this region, and by slipping a board between the lockers running down the sides a bed could be quickly arranged. This latter is a somewhat necessary provision to make as the sleeping out on the ground is hardly to be recommended in a place where nature has been so lavish with reptiles and insects as in the Everglades.

One extra passenger was carried in the person of a young Caracara, taken by Baynard late in February in the Indian Reservation of the Big Cypress country. His particular duty was to pose for pictures at regular intervals, but the rapid traveling and the rather miscellaneous diet we were forced to offer did not suit "Holiwakus," as Baynard had affectionately dubbed him, and he sickened and passed away at Lake Okeechobee on the 10th, not, however, without having served his purpose to some degree.

From Fort Myers, following the winding Caloosahatchee River and the drainage canals, it is approximately one hundred miles to Lake Okeechobee. In its lower course the Caloosahatchee is a broad and imposing river, averaging about two miles in width. A few miles above Fort Myers it narrows rapidly and soon becomes quite an ordinary stream. Up to the vicinity of LaBelle and Fort Thompson its banks are as a rule well wooded, principally with palmetto, water oak and pine, often heavily draped with the long, gray Spanish moss. Along much of its lower course the shores are fringed with mangroves. Fine orange and grape fruit groves border either bank at frequent intervals. From Fort Thompson to Lake Hicopotchee the river channel has been dredged and canalized. For many miles out of Fort Thompson the canal runs through a prairie country, with few or no trees to be seen except occasionally a clump of cabbage palmettoes, locally known as "cabbage islands." The prairie merges grad-



In Camp at Lake Hicopochee. (Photo by O. E. Baynard.)



ually into the Everglades with its great vistas of waving saw grass and rushes. Now and then a "cypress" may be seen not far from the canal. A last straight stretch known as the Four Mile Canal brings us to Lake Hicopochee. This is a small, roundish shaped lake about five miles in diameter connected with Lake Okeechobee by the Three Mile Canal. About Lake Okeechobee the timber is principally cypress on the east side, with great tangles of the impentrable custard apples on the south and southwesterly side.

On the first day out but a short distance was made, owing to motor trouble, but on the 5th, running from daylight till well on into the evening, we reached Lake Hicopochee. On the following day we explored the marshes and prairies about the lake, and in the late afternoon ran through the canal to Lake Okeechobee, tying up for the night under the "Flat-topped Cypress," a landmark well known to all travelers of this region, serving as it does to guide their craft to the canal. The 7th was stormy, so we did not venture out onto the lake, but on the 8th, the weather clearing, we ran to Rita, a little settlement at the beginning point of the South Canal, which is to lead to Miami. The 9th, 10th and 11th were spent searching for rookeries about the southerly and easterly portion of the lake. At Kramer's Island in South Bay we had the misfortune to suffer a serious breakdown in the form of a cracked piston, which halted further progress. As we were planning to make the balance of the four-week trip in a canoe, we had the further misfortune of Baynard being taken down with a severe attack of chills and fever. After he had taken 120 grains of quinine and apparently getting worse, and being 140 miles from a doctor, we decided it better to cut short our stay, and an opportunity offering, on the morning of the 12th, we had the disabled Egret and owner towed back to Fort Myers, reaching there on the morning of the 13th.

Taken as this list was in the early part of March, it of course contains many northern birds still lingering here in their winter haunts. A number of the early returning migrants from points still farther south were drifting into this

region too. Several resident species that a traveler not more than a decade ago would have found perhaps in comparative abundance are to-day missing, some of them forever: the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, the Parakeet, the Roseate Spoonbill and the Limpkin. The Egrets, both the large and the little Snowy, the Swallow-tailed and Everglade Kites and the Sandhill Crane will follow too before many years. The drainage of the Everglades is also playing its part in the bird-life of this region. The water-birds, unable to accommodate themselves to the changing conditions, are seeking new haunts, and with their passing is coming a rapid influx of the small land-birds, such as the Florida Cardinal, Mockingbird, Florida Yellowthroat, White-eyed Towhee, Florida Wren, Ground Dove and Florida Blue Jay.

1. *Podilymbus podiceps*. Pied-billed Grebe. Common both along the river and on the lakes. A flock of about 40 was seen on Lake Hicopochee March 6th.

2. *Gavia immer*. Loon. One bird was seen on Lake Okeechobee March 8th.

3. *Larus argentatus*. Herring Gull. Quite common on the river from Fort Myers to the Gulf, and on Lake Okeechobee as well.

4. *Larus atricilla*. Laughing Gull. Abundant on the lower river. Noted occasionally on the lakes.

5. *Sterna maxima*. Royal Tern. A few were seen about the river mouth March 2d.

6. *Anhinga anhinga*. Water Turkey. Common and usually observed many times each day. It is often seen on some limb or stump at the water's edge, with wings wide spread, enjoying a sun bath.

7. *Phalacrocorax auritus floridanus*. Florida Cormorant. Noted occasionally on the lower river. At Lake Okeechobee these birds are quite abundant and nesting at this season. The fishermen, however, are rapidly decreasing their numbers, using them, wherever there is a rookery handy, to bait their hooks.

8. *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*. White Pelican. Four birds were seen flying high overhead on Pine Island March 2d and presumably the same four over Sanibel in the afternoon.

9. *Pelecanus occidentalis*. Brown Pelican. Very common on the lower river and about the docks at Fort Myers.

10. *Anas fulvigula fulvigula*. Florida Duck. Four birds were seen at Lake Hicopochee March 6th.



Young Audubon's Caracara in his Palmetto Home below the Big Cypress, Lee County,  
(photo by O. E. Baynard )







Audubon's Caracara at the age of seven days. (Photo by O. E. Baynard.)